

What is claimed is:

1. A telephone call processing method, comprising the steps of:

operating a telephone switch to provide a call, requesting information, to an automated call processing device, coupled to the switch, which serves as an automated operator position;

operating the automated call processing device to collect call related information;

operating the automated call processing device to instruct the switch to transfer the call to a second operator position for additional call processing and to transfer at least some of the collected call related information to the second operator position.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

operating the automated call processing device to perform a speech recognition operation on speech received from the caller.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

prompting the caller for city and listing information.

4. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

using the results of the speech recognition operation to initiate a database look-up operation.

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1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the collected call
2 related information transferred to the second operator
3 position includes at least some data returned to the
4 automated call processing device in response to the
5 database look-up operation, the step of transferring at
6 least some data to the second operator position including
7 the step of transmitting data from the automated device
8 to the second operator position over a data link, that is
9 separate from the telephone switch, which couples the
10 automated call processing device to the second operator
11 position.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the transfer of at
2 least some of the collected call related information is
3 performed in response to a signal from the second
4 operator position.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the transfer of at
2 least some of the collected call related information is
3 performed in response to a signal from the second
4 operator position.

1 8. The method of claim 5, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 recording at least some audio information
4 provided by the caller to the automated call processing
5 device; and

6 wherein the collected call related information
7 transferred to the second operator position includes
8 recorded audio information.

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1 9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 processing audio information provided by the
4 caller to remove silence therefrom prior to recording.

1 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 performing compression on the audio information
4 provided by the caller prior to recording.

1 11. A call processing method, comprising the steps of:

2 receiving a call at a telephone switch;

3 connecting the call to an automated call
4 processing device coupled to the switch;

5 operating the automated call processing device
6 to interactively collect data from the caller;

7 operating the switch to transfer the call from
8 the automated call processing device to an operator
9 position; and

10 forwarding at least some of the interactively
11 collected data to the operator position.

1 12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 operating the automated call processing device to
4 perform a speech recognition operation on speech received
5 from the caller.

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1 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 providing an audio prompt to the caller requesting
4 information from the caller.

1 14. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 using the results of the speech recognition
4 operation to initiate a database look-up operation.

1 15. The method of claim 11, wherein the transfer of at
2 least some of the collected call related information is
3 performed in response to a signal from the operator
4 position.

1 16. A method of providing information to a caller,
2 comprising the steps of:

3 receiving a call at a telephone switch;

4 connecting the call to an automated call

5 processing device coupled to the switch;

6 operating the automated call processing device

7 to perform a first database look-up operation using call

8 information provided by the switch; and

9 providing information obtained using the

10 results of the first database look-up operation to the

11 caller.

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1 17. The method of claim 16,
2 wherein the automated call processing device is
3 an unmanned device;
4 wherein the call information is automated
5 number identification information; and
6 wherein the first database look-up operation is
7 an automated number identification look-up operation
8 which returns information on the location from which the
9 call was placed.

1 18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps
2 of:
3 performing a second database look-up operation;
4 and
5 wherein the step of providing information to
6 the caller, includes the step of providing to the caller
7 information generated from information returned to the
8 automated device in response to the first and second
9 look-up operations.

1 19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step
2 of:
3 receiving from the caller a telephone number
4 corresponding to a destination which the caller is trying
5 to reach, the second database look-up operation being
6 performed using the telephone number information received
7 from the caller.

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1 20. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps
2 of:

3 performing a second database look-up operation
4 using telephone number information provided by the caller
5 corresponding to a telephone located at a destination to
6 which the caller is seeking directions; and

7 wherein the step of providing information to the
8 caller, includes the step of providing to the caller
9 information returned to the automated device in response
10 to the second look-up operation.

1 21. The method of claim 20, wherein the step of
2 providing information to the caller includes the step of
3 faxing directions to a telephone number specified by the
4 caller.

1 22. The method of claim 18, wherein the second look-up
2 operation is a directional database look-up operation.

1 23. The method of claim 18, wherein the second look-up
2 operation is a restaurant database look-up operation.

1 24. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of
2 providing information obtained using the results of the
3 first database look-up operation to the caller includes
4 the step of:

5 using a text to speech device coupled to the
6 automated device and to the switch to provide audio
7 information to the caller.

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1 25. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of
2 providing information obtained using the results of the
3 first database look-up operation to the caller includes
4 the step of:

5 using a text to speech device included in the
6 automated device to provide audio information to the
7 caller.

1 ~~26.~~ A call processing method, comprising the steps of:

2 receiving a call at a telephone switch;

3 connecting the call to a manned operator

4 position;

5 operating the manned operator position to

6 interactively collect data from the caller; and

7 operating the switch to transfer the call from

8 the manned operator position to an automated call

9 processing device serving as an automated operator

10 position; and

11 operating the automated call processing device

12 to service the call.

1 27. The call processing method of claim 26, wherein the
2 step of operating the automated call processing device to
3 service the call includes the step of:

4 instructing the switch to complete the call to an
5 enhanced service provider.

1 28. The call processing method of claim 26, wherein the
2 step of operating the automated call processing device to
3 service the call includes the step of:

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operating the automated call processing device to perform a database look-up operation.

29. The call processing method of claim 28, wherein the step of operating the automated call processing device to service the call includes the step of:

instructing the switch to transfer the call to another operator position.

30. The call processing method of claim 27, wherein the step of operating the automated call processing device to service the call includes the step of:

instructing the switch to perform a billing operation.

31. The call processing method of claim 26, further comprising the step of:

operating the automated call processing device to receive at least some of the interactively collected data from the manned operator position.

32. The call processing method of claim 31, further comprising the step of transferring at least some of the interactively collected data from the manned operator position to the automated call processing device via a data link that couples the manned operator position and call processing device without passing through the telephone switch.

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